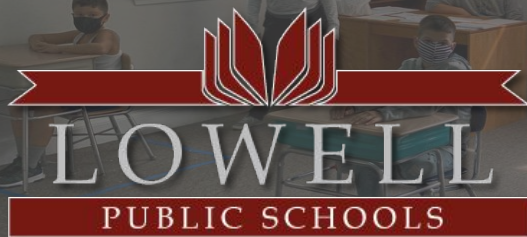
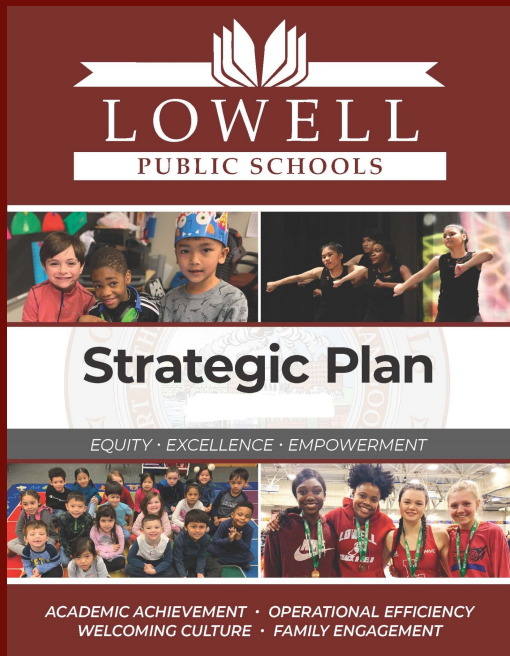




Ensuring that Every School is Safe and Welcoming for Every Student and Every Family, Every Day

Presentation to the Lowell School Committee - November 17, 2021





Agenda

1. What makes a safe and welcoming school environment?
2. What does the current data tell us?
3. What additional resources can be provided to further support security & supervision on every campus?
4. What additional resources can be provided to further support and reinforce rules and behavioral expectations at all schools?
5. What additional resources can be provided to further support teaching and learning in the classroom?
6. What are our immediate next steps?

A Safe and Welcoming School Environment Goes Beyond the Physical Attributes of the Facility

Engaging and rigorous teaching and learning in every classroom that is built on strong relationships and tailored to meet the needs of each student

Robust safety and security protocols that are clearly articulated, supported and supervised by caring adults

Consistent rules and expectations that are communicated, taught and reinforced equitably for all students in partnership with families



The Ongoing and Residual Impact of COVID-19 on the School Environment Remains Significant and Complex

- **Attendance.** LPS has implemented districtwide COVID-19 test-and-stay protocols, however, student and staff absences have still increased significantly from pre-pandemic levels, leading to added challenges with consistent school routines for students across schools.
- **Discipline.** Serious disciplinary incidents are down this year from the same time period of the most recent pre-pandemic school year, but concerns have surfaced with reported increases in other behavioral infractions among students, particularly at the middle and high school level, that will require greater ongoing support.
- **Professional Development.** Schools have not experienced a full-year of in-person learning since the 2018-2019 school year. 94 new teachers have been hired this school year and 170 total teachers have been hired since March 2020 - these teachers have not had the opportunity to benefit from more traditional, in-person classroom experiences and district professional development - and now require and deserve the same level of increased support that is typically provided to more novice educators.



Robust Security & Supervision

Additional resources to further ensure that all schools and corridors are secure and supervised at all times within the post-COVID context:



- **LPD School Resource Officers (SROs)** - Currently, the Lowell Police Department is experiencing a shortage of SROs due to recent retirements. We currently have 3 full-time SROs and a full-time sergeant assigned to LPS and stationed at Lowell High. LPD is hopeful that candidates will become available soon. In the meantime, LPS and LPD are working together to employ retired SROs to work part time to provide additional support for our schools over the next few months. The cost of this partnership agreement is forecasted to be approximately \$120,000. The required budget transfer to fund the additional temporary SRO positions has been prepared for SC consideration on 11/17.
- **LPS Security Guards** - Consistent with prior years, LPS currently employs eight Security Guards at Lowell High School. With the current SRO shortage, four additional security guard positions have been added to support Lowell High School and middle schools and increase supervision across the LHS campus. School security protocols are under daily review, and if at any time additional security guards are warranted at any school site, additional positions will be posted.



Consistent and Reinforced Rules and Expectations

Additional resources to further ensure that all rules and expectations are taught and reinforced equitably for all students in the post-COVID context:

- **Positive Behavioral Resource Teachers** - In collaboration with the UTL, a Positive Behavioral Resource Teacher position has been developed to work at each school to further support teachers and school-based staff as they continue to incorporate positive behavior management strategies into the learning environment. That job description has been prepared for SC review and consideration on 11/17 prior to posting. We recommend hiring a total of 29 school-based PBR teachers with 5 assigned to LHS, 2 assigned to the STEM and 1 assigned full-time to every other comprehensive elementary, K-8 and middle school.
- **Mentors and Interns** - An RFP is being developed to gauge the interest, capacity and cost among available partner organizations to recruit, staff and support school-based, student/peer mentors to guide students one-on-one as they continue to navigate the evolving challenges of the post-COVID environment. Once the RFP window closes, we will assess the responses and present a recommendation for SC review and consideration at a future meeting. We are also simultaneously collaborating with UML to explore a potential partnership in experiential learning for UML students to provide mentoring support within LPS.





Rigorous and Engaging Teaching and Learning

Additional resources to further ensure that all classrooms are equipped to provide all students with rigorous and engaging learning experiences, every day in the post-COVID context:

- **Additional Classroom Support Paraprofessionals** - A significant substitute shortage is among the numerous, critical staffing shortages currently affecting school districts across the country. As a result, paraprofessionals are often pulled from their standard assignment to cover teacher absences. Through a newly acquired grant, we will be hiring up to 28 additional paraprofessionals to supplement school staffing levels and further support schools with inclusion and social emotional supports for students at no additional cost to the district. The positions are currently posted. No further SC action related to these positions is required.
- **Expanded Substitute Pool** - To further strategize through the substitute shortage in LPS, 10 additional positions were added to provide full-time building-based substitutes at Renaissance Schools, the substitute daily rate was increased across the board, and a paid option was added for current teachers to provide additional support for substitute recruitment and longevity. In addition, we are exploring a partnership with Middlesex Community College as another possible vehicle for further expanding the available sub pool.





Immediate Next Steps

- Week of 11/15 - Security Guard interviews will be conducted for new added positions. Positions will remain open until filled.
- Week of 11/15 - Planning meeting scheduled with University of Massachusetts Lowell regarding student mentors/field placements.
- Week of 11/15 - Interview and hire for newly posted paraprofessional support positions.
- Week of 11/15 - RFP for LHS peer mentors will be completed and the public RFP process will be initiated.
- 11/17 - Budget transfer for temp SRO role recommended for approval by School Committee. If funding is authorized by the SC, we will work with LPD to recruit and place recently retired police officers in part-time SRO positions immediately.
- 11/17- Positive Behavioral Resource Teacher job description recommended for approval by SC. If approved, position will be posted on 11/18. Interviews will be scheduled immediately upon the close of the posting.
- 11/17 - Alignment of substitute pay rate for experienced college professors with the retired teacher rate recommended to SC. Subsequent to that decision, recruitment materials will be launched in partnership with Middlesex Community College.



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Through the hard work of teachers, administrators and support staff at all levels and with the continued partnerships with families and service-providers across the city, we are confident that our students will be better off from having experienced this unprecedented crisis here in Lowell than if they had been anywhere else.

Thank you to every organization and individual who has reached out and 'raised their hand' to assist in the current efforts to ensure our schools remain safe and welcoming for every student and every family, every day.

